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ABSTRACT

Educational objectives specify in precise, often measurable terms the results expected from or activities involved in designated aspects of the educational process. Product objectives identify the measurable results expected as a result of specified activities performed under specified conditions. Process objectives identify activities to be performed under specified conditions, but which do not necessarily lead to measurable results. Objectives should be understandable, measurable when possible, accurate, realistic, and brief. (Author/PGD)

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Seven — Operating and Evaluating the Program

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SYSTEMATIC PLANNING SERIES
FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

MONOGRAPH NUMBER 4

DEVELOPING OBJECTIVES

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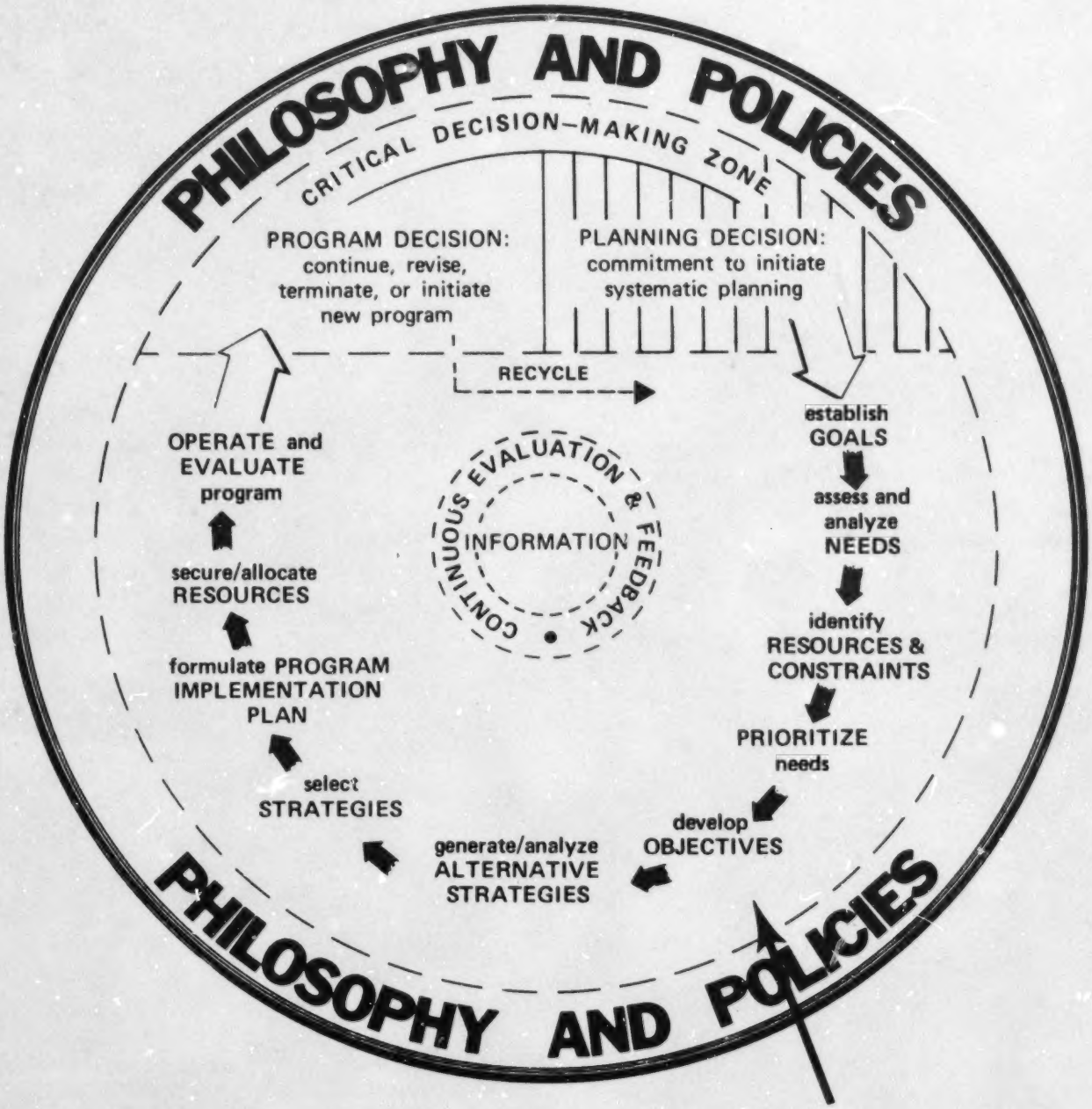

A PLANNING CYCLE

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND EVALUATION
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DEVELOPING OBJECTIVES

Before considering alternative strategies for meeting the priority needs identified in the preceding phase of the planning cycle, precise statements which give direction to individual and organizational efforts and serve as mileposts against which to measure progress toward goal attainment should be developed. In monograph number one, goals were characterized as broad, general statements of intent which express long-range, difficult to measure, and somewhat timeless ends toward which effort is directed. Although establishment of goals is an essential phase of the planning process, it soon becomes evident, as one moves through the planning cycle, that additional statements assuring more specificity and providing a greater degree of certainty and measurability are needed. These clearer, more manageable statements are objectives, and should relate to both the priority needs and the established goals (from which the priority needs were derived). An objective may be thought of as a target for action in contrast to a goal which is more a perception of an ideal. Without clearly stated objectives, it is difficult to communicate what is to be accomplished and it is virtually impossible to make a valid, meaningful evaluation. The absence of specific, measurable outcome statements leaves one without adequate guidance or a means for determining program effectiveness. The importance of developing meaningful objectives can be easily demonstrated by examining the following typical goal statement which could have been established for a particular school system: "To ensure that all students become proficient in the use of communication skills." No one is likely to argue that this is not an important, worthwhile, commendable ideal toward which effort should be directed, but one would find it difficult to understand specifically what is intended (i.e. will the system concentrate its efforts on reading, or writing, or speaking, or spelling, or English grammar?. . . .), what strategies are suggested (i.e. will programs be implemented in remedial reading, individualized word attack instruction, spelling improvement, English usage? . . . .), and how goal attainment will be evaluated (i.e. how will progress be determined, what will the learners be expected to do to demonstrate accomplishment, how will anyone know if activities are effective, are the new programs any better than the old ones? . . . .). It is clear that appropriate objectives must be developed if questions of this nature are to be answered to anyone's satisfaction.

Much has been written in recent years about educational objectives. Many descriptive terms have been employed in an attempt to differentiate between the various types of objectives (usually based upon use). Even the most cursory scanning of the literature reveals that these efforts, sincere and well-intended as they may have been, nevertheless, have resulted in considerable confusion and consternation for the practitioner. Without even opening that frustating "can of worms" known as "how to write objectives," those struggling to get a handle on the basic terminology are confronted with the immediate

problem of how to classify objectives in a sensible fashion that avoids these difficulties. What simple, straight-forward, understandable, and practical terms can be used to clearly distinguish a certain type objective from another? Are there several different types, or is it inadvisable and unnecessary to be concerned with types of objectives? Are the following commonly used terms synonymous, or do they have significantly different meanings? (Behavioral objectives, performance objectives, learner-oriented objectives, process objectives, program objectives, instructional objectives, product objectives, non-learner oriented objectives, organizational objectives, curriculum objectives, specific objectives, continuing objectives ...) Obviously, some of these terms are synonymous, some are rather meaningless, and others represent important and distinguishable differences in purpose and/or use. As the list of possibilities grows with virtually every writer or user, the task of deciding which terms to use in designating types of objectives looms larger, more foreboding and confounding.

In developing the objective component in the proposed approach to systematic planning, it was necessary to decide upon a realistic, meaningful way to classify objectives. Practically everyone in education is familiar with the terms "product objective" and "process objective." Furthermore, the definitions for these two types of objectives are relatively easy to understand and to clearly differentiate between. Thus, to avoid confusion and provide a logical means of classifying objectives, it seemed appropriate to make a clearcut distinction and refer to objectives as either "product" or "process." These utilitarian terms adequately serve the purposes of a systematic approach to planning.

A **product objective** is a statement defining the expected or desired outcome, product, end state and/or benefit to be achieved. **A process objective** is a statement describing an activity which directly or indirectly affects the performance of a learner. Product objectives are learner oriented and should be stated in performance terms whenever possible. When developing objectives, whether product or process, one must remember the importance of clearly communicating specific intent and providing for measurement of any change or achievement. In a product objective, the intent is usually to bring about a desired behavioral change on the part of a learner (who can be a student, teacher, administrator, etc.). A well-written product objective then, should describe specifically a desired learner outcome in terms of a proposed change in behavior or performance (what will the learner be like when he successfully completes the learning experience?) and should state how the change will be measured. Insistence upon inclusion of certain basic qualities in well-stated objectives is designed to force the communication of intent (what specifically are we trying to accomplish?) and a precise description of the criterion of success (to what extent was the objective achieved?)

Suggestions for Developing Product Objectives

Based upon extensive research and development, EPIC has proposed a practical, workable system for developing and writing objectives at all educational levels[1]. Use of this approach for writing objectives in performance terms involves answering six basic questions which should serve as guidelines in developing product objectives:

1. Who is going to perform the specified behavior?

2. What behavior is expected to occur?

3. Under what circumstances or conditions is the behavior going to be observed?

4. How is the behavior going to be measured?

5. What amount of time or necessary prerequisites are needed to bring about the desired behavior?

6. What is the expected proficiency level?

The following is an example of a **product objective** stated in performance terms:

> By the end of the sixth month of school, fifth grade students in the _____ school system will show an average increase in reading comprehension of five percentile points as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Once **product** objectives supporting the prioritized needs and established goals have been developed, it is possible to move into the "generating and analyzing alternative strategies" phase of the planning process which will lead to selection of those strategies which seem most likely to result in achievement of the product objectives.

The development of **process** objectives should be postponed until after alternative strategies have been selected. This is logical in view of the fact that the specific activities which will be described need to be determined before the process objectives can be written. Although activities will naturally be considered in conjunction with all possible alternative strategies, it is not necessary to take the time or expend the effort to write process objectives for all alternative strategies considered. (The generating, analyzing, and

[1] *Developing and Writing Performance Objectives*. Tucson, Arizona: Educational Innovators Press, Inc., 1971.

selecting strategies process is explained in more detail in monograph number five.) However, when the strategy(ies) has (have) been selected, activities designed to attain the outcome or product stated in the product objectives should be specified in the form of process objectives.

Suggestions for Developing Process Objectives

The following elements should be included in developing a process objective:[2]

1. The title of the individual(s) and/or group(s) responsible for implementing and carrying out the activity.

2. Any activity whose accomplishment increases the probability of reaching the product objective.

3. Important time factors operating in completion of the activity.

4. Documentation of the activity upon its completion.

The following is an example of a process objective developed in relation to the sample product objective stated on the preceding page:

> During the second grading period, each fifth grade teacher will spend twenty minutes of reading instruction time daily using the EDL Reading Materials as evidenced by appropriate entries in the Teacher Instructional Monitoring Report.

Obviously, the purpose of planning and implementing activities is to directly and/or indirectly affect the performance of learners. As previously emphasized, the procedure for defining such activities is the process objective. Although everything that is done in the educational setting should be for the ultimate purpose of providing better quality education and improved learning opportunities for students, it is apparent that not every activity will directly affect the learner. EPIC suggests that there are at least three distinct kinds of process objectives, which are readily identifiable depending upon intent or purpose:[3]

[2] *Developing and Writing Process Objectives*. Tuscon, Arizona: Educational Innovators Press, 1973.

[3] *Ibid.*

1. **Administrative Process Objective**-A Statement that describes an activity that is not intended to demonstrate any direct relationship to the performance of a learner.

2. **Support Process Objective** - A statement that describes an activity in which the learner is directly involved, but a performance objective has not been developed for the activity.

3. **Instructional Process Objective** - A statement that describes an activity that is directly related to a performance objective.

In addition to types, process objectives also can be written at different levels depending upon the role of individuals. (i.e. at the student, teacher, principal, central office staff, or school board level.)

Naturally, a person's position in the educational structure, his role definition, and his relationship to the learner will determine the relevancy, emphasis, and appropriateness of the kind(s) of process objective(s) which will be developed and with which he will be concerned.

Current educational planning and management systems require that both product and process objectives be clearly specified in terms that are understandable, measurable, and realistic.[4] If the objectives of a plan for educational change and improvement are poorly stated, ambiguous or vague expressions of organizational intent and desired outcomes, the plan may become a liability once it becomes operational, causing frustation and creating confusion at all levels. To assure that objectives are well formulated, different writers have suggested a variety of criteria for assessing the quality of educational objectives. There is rather universal acknowledgement that quality objectives should be:

1. **Understandable** - expressed in clear, unambiguous language.

2. **Product-oriented** whenever possible - describe behaviors expected or outcomes/products to be produced.

[4] *Planning for Educational Improvement*. Columbia, S.C., South Carolina Department of Education, 1975.

3. **Accurate** - reflect the genuine intent of the organization.

4. **Realistic** - achievable in terms of resources, time, talents, techniques available, etc.

5. **Brief** - described in as few words as possible.

6. **Measurable** - identify a means for measuring learner performance or verifying progress.

Following is an example of how: (1) goals and needs assessment information can be compared to produce a documented statement of need (Figure 1), (2) a **product** objective can be developed to satisfy the need, and (3) appropriate **process** objectives can be written which lead to achievement of the product objective. It is important to note that the need statement in the "Need" column does not contain any mention of **solutions**. The idea at this point is to identify the **problem**, not suggest what is to be done or how the need is to be met. (This will be done later, of course.) As difficult as it may be, those involved in the planning process must resist the temptation to take enticing short-cuts, thereby "skipping" some of the important details in their zeal to get some kind of program in operation to resolve a problem. It is simply too early in the planning process (you don't have enough information, haven't analyzed the problem, and don't have any objectives) to assume the best way to meet a particular need and achieve the goal is to "offer a remedial reading program," or to "establish a reading lab," or to decide that "we should employ six more reading teachers." . . . . More detailed consideration of strategies (approaches, course of action, methods) which, when implemented, will contribute to product objective accomplishment, should follow the objective development phase of the planning cycle.

An example of a possible product objective that could be developed for the preceding need statement might be: By May 15, 1977, the mean reading achievement level of eighth grade students, as measured by the CTBS, will have increased by 1.2 years.

The following process objectives could be appropriate for achievement of the product objective:

1. **Administrative** - By October 1, the eighth grade English teachers will review each student's test results and submit to the principal, on forms provided, the names and reading scores of all students who scored below the 7.1 grade placement level.

FIGURE 1

DESIRED CONDITION (What should be)	EXISTING CONDITION (What is)	NEED (Discrepancy)
All students should acquire basic skills and understandings in communication	**Base-line data** Results of the CTBS administered Sept. 15, 1976, revealed that eighth grade students in the _____ schools were reading on the average, 1.7 years below the national norm and eleventh grade students were achieving 2.9 years below the norm. **Perceptual data** A recently conducted survey of parents and teachers revealed that 94% of the respondents felt that the _____ schools are graduating entirely too many students who have not acquired the necessary basic skills and understanding in communication. This is especially evident in reading and writing.	There is a need to significantly increase the reading achievement level of students in the _____ schools. (There is conclusive evidence that present eighth and eleventh grade students are in need of special assistance)

2. **Support** - The system reading specialist will conduct an individual diagnostic reading session with all eighth grade students identified above by Nov. 1, 1976, as evidenced by submission of a written report to the building principal.

3. **Instructional** - Beginning Nov. 6, 1976, the eighth grade English teachers will provide special instruction for designated students consisting of completion of lessons 1 - 8 in the Vocabulary Building Program by Dec. 1, 1976, as evidenced by the Reading Improvement Monitoring Report.

In this case additional **process** objectives of each type probably would be required for achievement of the **product** objective. However, every **product** objective obviously does not require the writing of all three types (administrative, support, instructional) of **process** objectives. The types, level, and number of **process** objectives will be determined by the activities necessary to accomplish the desired outcome stated in the **product** objective.